Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture focuses on representations of work, from the decade in which the American Federation of Labor was formed, to the inauguration of the federal works projects that subsidized American artists during the Great Depression. In both monumental form and small-scale edition, these sculptures provide a public record of attitudes toward labor during a transitional period in the history of relations between labor and management. Melissa Dabakis argues that sculptural imagery of industrial labor was both shaped by and helped shape belief systems about the nature of work and the role of the worker in modern society. By situating a group of important sculptures within a context of labor history, gender studies, and American art history, her book addresses key monuments and small-scale statuary in which labor was often constituted as “manly” and where the work ethic mediated both artistic production and reception.

Melissa Dabakis is Associate Professor of Art History and Co-Director of American Studies at Kenyon College. A recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the J. Paul Getty Grant Program, she has contributed to American Quarterly and Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies.
Cambridge Studies in American Visual Culture

Series Editor:
Patricia Hills, Boston University

Advisory Board:
Albert Boime, University of California, Los Angeles
Garnett McCoy, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution
Lowery Stokes Sims, Metropolitan Museum of Art
Terry Smith, University of Sydney
Roger Stein, University of Virginia
Alan Wallach, College of William and Mary

Cambridge Studies in American Visual Culture provides a forum for works on aspects of American art that implement methods drawn from related disciplines in the humanities, including literature, post-modern cultural studies, gender studies, and “new history.” The series includes studies that focus on a specific set of creative circumstances and critical responses to works of art, and that situate the art and artists within a historical context of changing systems of taste, strategies for self-promotion, and ideological, social, and political tensions.
VISUALIZING LABOR IN
AMERICAN SCULPTURE
MONUMENTS, MANLINESS, AND THE
WORK ETHIC, 1880–1935

MELISSA DABAKIS

Kenyon College
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge. It furthers the University’s mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521461474

© Melissa Dabakis 1999

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999
First paperback edition 2011

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Dabakis, Melissa.
p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in American visual culture)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
NBR1992.133D24 1999
730’.973—dc21 98-45452

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org
For C.D. and R.E.Y.
CONTENTS

List of Illustrations  page xi
Acknowledgments  xv
Introduction  1

ONE
From Craftsman to Operative: The Work Ethic Ideology and American Art  10

TWO
Martyrs and Monuments: The Haymarket Affair  35

THREE
The Spectacle of Labor: The World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893  62

FOUR
The Erotics of the Laboring Body: Douglas Tilden’s Mechanics Fountain  83

FIVE
A Museological Tribute to the Work Ethic: The Constantin Meunier Exhibition  105

SIX
The Stoker, the Ragpicker, and the Striker: American Genre Sculpture in the Progressive Era  127

SEVEN
Icons of Labor: Capitalism, Communism, and the Politics of Sculpture, 1917 to 1935  174
Conclusion: Organized Labor and the Politics of Representation: The Samuel Gompers Memorial  212
Notes  225
Bibliography  273
Index  287
# ILLUSTRATIONS

3. Winslow Homer, *The Morning Bell*, c. 1872  
12. T. de Thulstrop, “*The Haymarket Riot,*” 1886  
15. Michelangelo Buonarroti, Pietà, 1498–1500  
17. Auguste Rodin, *Bellona*, 1878  
18. Auguste Rodin, *The Call to Arms*, 1879  
19. Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People, the 28th of July 1830*, 1830  
22. Model Workingman’s Home  
ILLUSTRATIONS

32. Douglas Tilden, *Football Players*, 1893
34. Frederick Remington, *The Courier du Bois and the Savage*, 1892
35. Giovanni da Bologna, *The Rape of the Sabine Woman*, 1583
36. Constantin Meunier, *Crouching Miner*, ca. 1880-90
38. Constantin Meunier, *Monument to Labor*, 1897-1902
40. Constantin Meunier, *The Sower*, ca. 1880-90
41. Maximilien Luce, drawing after Meunier’s *Tillers of the Soil*, 1892
42. Constantin Meunier, *Industry*, 1893-4
43. Constantin Meunier, *The Miner*, 1895
44. Jean-François Millet, *The Sower*, 1849
47. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *Girl Skating*, 1909
48. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *The Ragpicker*, 1911
49. Mahonri Young, *Bovet Arthur – A Laborer*, 1904
50. Ethel Meyers, *Fifth Avenue Girl (Portrait Impression of Mrs. Adolph Lewisohn)*, 1912
51. Chester Beach, *The Stoker*, 1907
52. Mahonri Young, *Stevedore*, 1904
53. Mahonri Young, *Man with a Pick*, 1915
54. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *Girl Skating*, 1905
55. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *The Ragpicker*, 1911
56. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *Her Only Brother*, 1919
57. Abastenia St. Leger Eberle, *The White Slave*, 1913
58. Charles Oscar Haag, *The Immigrants*, 1905
60. Charles Oscar Haag, Model for *The Strike*, ca. 1905
62. Charles Oscar Haag, Model for *Corner Stone of the Castle*, ca. 1909
63. Charles Oscar Haag, *Democracy (Memorial for John P. Altgeld)*, 1914
64. Adolf Wolff, *Temple of Solidarity*, 1914
65. Max Kalish, *New Power*, ca. late 1920s
67. Lewis Hine, *Empire State Building, New York City*, 1930-1
68. Max Kalish, *Steelworker*, ca. 1926
ILLUSTRATIONS

69. Mahonri Young, *The Rigger*, 1917
70. “No Longer the Man with the Hoe,” 1921
71. Max Kalish, *The End of the Day*, 1930
72. Lewis Hine, *The Brakeman*, 1921
73. Gerrit Beneker, *Steam Fitter*, 1921
74. Max Kalish, *The Spirit of American Labor*, ca. 1927
75. Saul Baizerman, *Digger*, 1923–5
77. Saul Baizerman, *The City (Vision of New York)*, 1921
78. Saul Baizerman, *Crippled Sharpener*, 1920–2
79. Saul Baizerman, *Cement Man*, 1924
80. Adolf Wolff, *Coal Miner on Strike*, 1931
81. Aaron Goodelman, *Man with Wheelbarrow*, ca. 1933
82. Robert I. Aitken, *The Samuel Gompers Memorial*, 1933
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the debt that I owe to others for their help and encouragement in the researching and writing of this book. Nonetheless, it is a difficult task, I admit, to provide sufficient gratitude to all those who offered support over the many years of this project’s existence. My best efforts follow. This book would not have been possible except for the generous support from Kenyon College Faculty Development Grants, an ACLS Grant in Aid, an NEH Travel to Collections Grant, an NEH Fellowship for College Teachers and Independent Scholars, and a J. Paul Getty Fellowship in Art History and the Humanities. Visiting scholar appointments in the Art History Department of Boston University and at the Center for Literary and Cultural Studies at Harvard University greatly facilitated the final stages of research for this book.

In excavating primary and secondary sources, I traveled to archives, libraries, and museums all over the country. I wish to acknowledge the staffs of the following institutions who provided indispensable research assistance: the Albright Knox Art Gallery, the American Swedish Historical Museum; the Archives of American Art; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley; the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; the Boston Public Library Special Collections; the Brooklyn Museum; the Chicago Historical Society; Columbia University Special Collections and Archive; the George Meany Memorial Archives; the Harvard University Libraries; the Labodie Collection at the University of Michigan; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the National Academy of Design; the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution; the National Sculpture Society; the New York Public Library; the Newark Museum; the Newberry Library; the Pennsylvania Capitol Preservation Committee; the Philadelphia Museum of Art Archives; the Ryerson Library at the Art Institute of Chicago; the Tanimen Library at New York University; and the Worcester Art Museum.

Many friends and colleagues read or heard drafts of the manuscript in its multiple manifestations or spoke to me at length about different aspects of the book. I have very much appreciated their thoughts, comments, and criticisms, and I hope that their concerns have received the appropriate attention. My thanks go to William J. Adelman, Mildred Albronda, Michele Bogart, Harry Brod, Julie Brown Clifton Crais, Wanda Corn, Linda Docherty, Eugene...
Dwyer, Betsy Fahlman, Ellen Furlough, James Gilbert, Archie Green, Brian Greenberg, Barbara Grosseclose, Ruthann Hubbert-Kemper, Patricia Johnston, Sura Levine, Joanne Lukitsch, Lucy Maddox and the editorial committees of *American Quarterly*, Janet Marstine, Garnett McCoy, the Newberry Seminar in American Social History, Robert Reynolds, Jr., Peter Rutkoff, Pamela Scully, Roger Stein, Cecelia Tichi, Alan Wallach, Cécile Whiting, and Rebecca Zurier. My special thanks goes to Ellen Todd who read the entire manuscript with attention and care and helped me corral its diverse conceptual strands into a more coherent structure. Patricia Hills, the editor of the American Visual Culture series at Cambridge University Press, offered her invaluable scholarly expertise while supporting this project from its very genesis. To them both I am especially indebted. Donna Maloney provided enormous technical support in the last stages of the manuscript preparation. Beatrice Rehl, fine arts editor at Cambridge, helped shepherd this book through all stages of the publication process. And, finally, my special thanks and gratitude are reserved for my husband, Daniel Younger, photographer, editor, and one-man support network.

Portions of this book have previously appeared in abridged and revised form in various journals:


